**Distribution Agreement**

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known, including display on the world wide web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Ross Fogg 9 April 2015

“It Never Was America to Me”: American Literature During the Great Depression

By

Ross Fogg

Master of Arts

English

Walter Kalaidjian, Ph.D.

Advisor

Accepted:

Lisa A. Tedesco, Ph.D.

Dean of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies

9 April 2015

“It Never Was America to Me”: American Literature During the Great Depression

By

Ross Fogg

Master of Arts, Emory University, 2015

Bachelor of Arts (*summa cum laude*), Emory University, 2014

English

Walter Kalaidjian, Ph.D.

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in English
2015

Abstract

“It Never Was America to Me”: American Literature During the Great Depression

By

Ross Fogg

This Master’s thesis examines the ways in which literature focuses on subjects pertinent to the study of the Great Depression like affirmations and disillusionment with the government’s response to widespread unemployment; destitute living conditions; loss of faith in public institutions; the concentration of power surrounding the Depression as well as concurrent class divisions; decreased valuation of the individual; portrayals and representations of race; and how the Great Depression and its literature inform current understandings of the Great Recession. The specific literature that this thesis examines includes John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath, In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men,* and *Cannery Row*. It likewise examines James Agee’s and Walker Evans’s *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*; Dale Maharidge’s and Michael Williamson’s *And Their Children After Them*;Richard Wright’s *12 Million Black Voices*;Ernest Hemingway’s *To Have and Have Not*; Robert Penn Warren’s *All the King’s Men*; poetry by Langston Hughes, William Carlos Williams, and Charles Simic; Philipp Meyer’s *American Rust*; and David Foster Wallace’s *The Pale King*. There are also many sources of historical data, literary theory and criticism ranging from original reviews of the literature presented and present-day analysis.

“It Never Was America to Me”: American Literature During the Great Depression

By

Ross Fogg

Master of Arts, Emory University, 2015

Bachelor of Arts (*summa cum laude*), Emory University, 2014

English

Walter Kalaidjian, Ph.D.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in English
2015

**Table of Contents:**

1

Chapter 1. Introduction: Locating Great Depression Literature

Chapter 2. National Identity, Deterioration of Public Institutions, and the Legacy of *The Grapes of Wrath*

8

Chapter 3. Genre, Documentation, and Systemic Poverty in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*

33

Chapter 4. The “We” Trope and Voicing the Voiceless: *12 Million Black Voices* and *To Have and Have Not*

54

Chapter 5. Great Depression Politics: Competing Ideologies in *In Dubious Battle* and Concentration of Power in *All the King’s Men*

73

Chapter 6. Depression-era Poetics of William Carlos Williams and Langston Hughes

100

Chapter 7. Complementary Great Depression Narratives in Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* and *Cannery Row*

114

128

Chapter 8. Conclusion: The Great Depression and the Great Recession

142

Works Cited